R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 015 158 SP 001 384

THE STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL OF EDUCATION.

BY- COLEMAN, JAMES S.
JOHNS HOPKINS UNIV., BALTIMORE, MD.

PUB DATE 7 OCT 67

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$1.08 25P.

DESCRIPTORS- CHANGE AGENTS, CITY GOVERNMENT, *DISADVANTAGED GROUPS, ECONOMICS, EDUCATIONAL CHANGE, EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGEMENT, *EDUCATIONAL DISCRIMINATION, EDUCATIONAL FINANCE, *EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES, EDUCATIONAL TRENDS, *FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, MINORITY GROUPS, MOBILITY, *PUBLIC EDUCATION, STANDARDS, STATE GOVERNMENT,

THIS PAPER EXAMINES THE EMERGING CONFLICT BETWEEN LOCAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS OR LOCAL AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS OVER VARIOUS EDUCATIONAL POLICIES THAT HAVE ARISEN BECAUSE OF THE NUMEROUS AGENCIES WHO ARE BOTH INTERESTED IN AND AFFECTED BY A CHILD'S EDUCATION. THE AUTHOR, AFTER REVIEWING THESE ISSUES, DISCUSSES THE EFFECT THIS CONFLICT WILL HAVE UPON CANADIAN AND UNITED STATES SCHOOLS OF THE FUTURE. THE ISSUES EXAMINED ARE--THE DIFFERENTIAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN OF VARYING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BACKGROUNDS, THE LOCAL NATIONAL CONFLICT OVER THE ISSUE OF MINORITY RIGHTS, THE FLUCTUATING POSITIONS OF SCHOOLS AS INSTRUMENTS OF SOCIAL CHANGE, AND THE STRUGGLE OVER THE DEVELOPMENT OF UNIFORM EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS. THE AUTHOR POINTS OUT THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ACTS AS A SUPPLEMENTING AGENT TO THE INDIVIDUAL'S POWER STRUGGLE WHEN THAT POWER IS DEFICIENT AT THE LOCAL LEVEL. USING A HYPOTHETICAL CONTROL SYSTEM, THE AUTHOR ASSESSES THE VALUE OF THE VARYING TYPES AND DEGREES OF NATIONAL AND STATE INTERVENTION INTO LOCAL ISSUES. THIS PAPER WAS PREPARED FOR A "SYMPOSIUM ON SOCIAL POLICY--LOCAL CONTROL OF EDUC.," OCT. 5-7, 1967, COLLEGE OF EDUC., UNIV. OF SASKATCHEWAN. (AF)

SP001384

ED015158

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF SCHOOLS

The Struggle for Control of Education

James S. Coleman

THE STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL OF EDUCATION

By

James S. Coleman

This paper was prepared for a Symposium on Social Policy: Local Control of Education, October 5-7, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, Saskutoon, Canada.

As a very first point, it is useful to recognize that education is inherently subject to a struggle for control. For a child is a joint product, first of all a child of two parents. They may well have different interests in his education, with a resulting struggle over it. When education moves outside the home, as it began to do for large numbers of children about a century and a half ago, this within-family struggle is overshadowed by the struggle between the family and the community which operates the school.

In more recent years, a second locus of conflict has emerged: conflict between the local community and the state or province, or the local community and the national government. It is this most recent conflict, between local authorities and agencies that transcend the local community, that I want to examine here. I want first to examine the content of these conflicts, and then to use these results to make a prognosis about the future of such local-state or local-federal conflict in schools in Canada and the United States.

Before setting out on this task, however, I want to impose a perspective that economists sometimes use in discussion of education. Economists have asked the question, Why are people willing to be taxed for education and thus help pay for other children's education, rather than merely paying for their own child's education in private schools? Why are there public schools at all? This question might of course be answered in humanitarian terms, arguing that many people hold that a child's opportunity should not be dependent on the accident of birth which placed him in a rich or poor, educated or illiterate, family. But economists have less confidence in the abundance of altruism than this, and instead look for motives of self interest behind every apparently benevolent action. They note, for example, that altruism and benevolence is probably no more widespread than it was a

few centuries ago, yet it is only since the industrial revolution that schools have become a common and even universal experience. They note as well that altruism and feelings of warmth for others in the community is greater in rural areas than in urban ones, but that the expenditures on public education are much higher in urban areas than in rural ones.

These economists would argue that people became interested in seeing that other people's children learned to read, write, and do numbers when those other people's children became useful to them -- in particular, when the family ceased to take care of all its members, who might be potential liabilities on the community, and when occupational mobility outside the family began to be the rule, rather than the exception. In short, when one man's children began to be potential assets or liabilities for other men, then interest in public education developed and led to the establishment of public schools.

An alternative argument to this one might go as follows. The introduction of public education was really the result of a democratic process: a majority of people voted for initiating and strengthening public education because a majority saw themselves as benefiting from it, paying less in taxes than they would through private schools, since the taxes would "soak the rich to benefit the poor." But this speculation is refuted by two facts. First, in the period when public education was initiated in most western countries, in the 19th century, voting on property-tax issues was limited to the taxpayers themselves; and clearly for this more affluent minority, private schools would have been less expensive. Second, a great deal of evidence in school tax and bond issues shows that those who most favor such issues are the community members who will pay most for it; while those who most oppose these issues are the community members who will pay nothing for it at all, and will receive greatest direct benefits. Thus on both these counts, the data indicate that those who most favor public

education are the very persons who could more cheaply educate their own children privately--but also the very persons for whom other people's children are potential assets or liabilities. The data suggest, then, that the development of public education did in fact derive from a selfish interest in the people's children as potential assets or liabilities.

Now quite obviously, if this was the motive behind the apparent altruism or humanitarianism that led to the establishment of public schools, members of the community would not only be willing to provide for other children's education, but would want to control it as well--to remove the option from the parents' hands, and establish minimum levels and specified content for education. School would become not merely a welfare service to be used if one likes, but a compulsory activity. And this is what it has become, with nearly all options out of parents' hands and in the hands of the community. The struggle for control between family and community remains, for the family did not lose all interest in the child's future when the community gained an interest. Clearly, however, the community has the upper hand: the parent cannot keep his child out of school, no matter how much harm he sees resulting from school; he cannot select what his child is to study, cannot select his teacher, and seldom can select among schools within the same system.

This perspective of certain economists of public finance implies that such a process of increasing interest in other people's children does not stop at community boundaries, but goes beyond. As geographic mobility makes of a state or province an economic unit, the kind of pressure that was exerted at the community level toward public education is now exerted at the state or provincial level toward state-supported and state-controlled education. Increasingly in recent years, states and provinces in the United States and Canada have supplemented local school finances; and at an even greater rate, states and provinces have increased their exercise of control, both of minimum

standards, and of specific content (frequently including a course in State history).

Similarly, as geographic mobility, and thus economic interdependence, increases, these same pressures build up at the national level; people throughout the country take increasing interest in affecting the education of children in regions other than their own, and the federal government as their agent, enters the battle for control of education.

This perspective of course is not "the explanation" for conflicts in education. It does show, however, the intrinsic sources of conflict over education, because of the multitude of others, beyond his home, beyond his community, and beyond his state, who are potentially affected by a child's education, and who thus have an interest in controlling it. Thus the conflicts are not capricious nor inexplicable, nor based on misunderstandings; they occur because many agencies have an interest in a child's education, and these interests sometimes conflict.

The Content of Conflict

Neither is the content of the issues capricious or inexplicable. It derives from the structural positions that these various interested parties occupy. I will discuss the most important of these structurally-induced issues.

Differential Educational Opportunity

I quote from a recent edition of a London newspaper:

> "A hush-hush meeting has taken place between Mr. Anthony Crosland, Minister of Education and Science, and the chairman of Surrey County Council, one of the few remaining comprehensive "rebel" counties in the country.
>
> Mr. L. A. White, the county council chairman, met Mr. Crosland last week.
>
> But so secret was the meeting that neither party will reveal when it was held or whether a solution was reached." *

* Evening Standard, Tuesday, August 8, 1967.

This quotation illustrates one of the major areas of conflict between national and local educational policies. The conflict in this case is over the change from a specialized secondary educational system -- with grammer schools for those who pass the eleven-plus examination, and secondary modern schools for those who fail it -- to a comprehensive system, in which every child goes to the school in his neighborhood. Whether the specific policy is the appropriate means to the British government's goal is open to some doubt; but the goal of the national policy, and the source of resistance of the local authorities, are clear. The national government's goal is to provide increased educational opportunity for children from less advantaged family backgrounds, and the local authorities' opposition stems principally from fears that children from more advantaged backgrounds will be hurt.

In the United States, the conflicts in 1965 and 1966 over guidelines established by the U.S. Office of Education for southern school desegregation had exactly the same basis. The national government was intervening to increase the opportunity of children from deprived backgrounds. In both the U.S. and Canada, federal legislation providing aid to education has been largely oriented to increasing opportunities for deprived children -- in Canada, through funds for technical education, and in the United States, through funds for school systems serving large numbers of low-income families.

This issue, then, appears to be an important one in national vs. local conflicts over educational policy. It is not the only issue -- I shall indicate others -- but it is an important one. Yet there is no clear <u>a priori</u> reason why this should be so, why the national government should become the spokesman for the underprivileged, and the local community resist this. To gain an idea of why this is so requires an examination of social structure and its manifestation in political power at the local and national levels.

In local communities, the political structure is most often dominated by

the property-owning classes, including the social and business elite of the community. As many community studies have made clear, communities, both suburban and independent, and small or medium-sized cities, are not governed through a strong competition by political parties, but are governed by an oligarchy among whose members there is more consensus than conflict. In addition to interests in universal education described earlier, these men have three interests which together lead in the direction of a system of preferential or differentiated education. The first is a desire for their own children to have maximum benefits from the educational system. The second is to keep low property taxes, from which education is laregly financed. Both these interests lead to the concentration of children in schools according to background (whether through concentration of residence or through selection), and greater educational effort expended on children from better backgrounds. A third interest, that of maintaining the social order, or the social structure of the community, without the disruption caused by high social mobility, is also held by consensus in such oligarchies, and reinforces the pressure toward differential educational opportunity. In Britain and Europe, these interests can be seen more clearly than in America, for the schools have characteristically been differentiated by social class. The first establishment of the public school system in England, in 1870, was by a national Act, designed to supplement the existing system of private education for the middle and upper classes (largely run by churches) with schools run by locally-elected school boards, for children not served by the private schools. These "board schools," as they were known, tended to have larger classes and poorer teachers than the voluntary schools.* Subsequent to that Act, the church, or

---

* See, Malcolm Seaborne, Recent Education From Local Sources, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967, chapter 2. There seems to be an interesting tendency, in the differential treatment provided by local school systems, for building and other physical facilities to favor those from deprived backgrounds, while the quality of teachers and size of classes favor those from better backgrounds. Seaborne shows this in Liecester in 1900; the recent report by the U.S. Office of Education (Equality of Educational Opportunity, Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), indicates a similar tendency in the U.S. in 1965.

voluntary, schools became slowly incorporated into the public system through grants from local taxes; but the differential treatment was built into the system from the outset, and in secondary education has continued up to the present.

In the United States and western Canada, these interests were manifested not by different types of institutions for different social classes, but wherever population density permitted it, residential concentration which created homogeneous schools. When population density did not permit class-homogeneous schools, the close linkages of the school administrators and staff with the structure of power in the community helped create greater opportunity for children from "better" families. For example, among ten high schools in Illinois I studied several years ago, this was evident in two different ways. In one upper-middle class suburban high school, children from a nearby lower-class neighborhood were served by the school as well. The standards of the school were maintained through a two-track system that sharply separated the two sets of students. The lower track was a vocational track which took the smaller group of non-academic students physically away from the "academic section" of the school.* A second way in which this differential treatment manifested itself was evident in three schools, two in small towns, and one in a medium-sized city. In these schools, the close integration of the teaching and administrative staff with the social elites of the communities meant, as several teachers in these schools commented, that the children from the wrong part of town were not encouraged toward high achievement and further education. This occurred in spite of curricula that were largely undifferentiated, with ungrouped classes, but merely because teachers and students knew who "should" be good students, and who should not.

---

* The existence of this two-track system does not necessarily mean, of course, that there was differential opportunity for children from different backgrounds. Knowledge of the criteria used in assignment, and the rate of mobility between tracks would be necessary to determine that. Nevertheless, the two-track system permitted the children from the upper-middle class families to be insulated from the others, which represents one aspect of the local interests.

I am not suggesting that such differential opportunity between and within schools is a pronounced and pervasive characteristic of school systems in North America, although it clearly is in Europe. I am using these examples rather to indicate that the social and political structure of local communities tends to create school systems which provide such differential opportunity, simply because of the interests that are strongest in these communities. This general principle is supported even by some cases in which there does not appear such differential treatment. For example, in some of the Illinois schools in the study mentioned above, there appeared no differential treatment by social background. These were schools in communities with a higher proportion of working-class parents, with political and social structures in which working-class parents were more highly represented. In those communities, and in the schools, the high proportion of working-class families meant that they, rather than the middle classes, constituted the politically dominant group.

Perhaps the communities in which the interests favoring inequality of educational opportunity can be best seen are those with a sharp caste system, as in the traditional southern U.S. The preservation of this social order is greatly aided by sharply differential treatment in education, which transmits the necessarily different orientations and aspirations to members of the two castes. Such a social structure shows in sharp outline the tendencies which are present but blurred in other communities.

At the other extreme are the highly fluid, continually changing suburban towns without a stable social structure. In these communities, the interest in preservation of the social order is not present, because almost no one has roots in the community, or cares greatly about its future character. However, in these communities, the two other interests mentioned before combine to make homogeneous schools with inequalities of opportunity -- interest in greatest possible benefits for one's own child, and interest in the lowest possible expenditures for others. The very mobility that characterizes these communities makes it possible for their

members to realize such aims -- not by maintaining the social stratification within the community, but by residential mobility that creates a stratification between communities, creating "good" and "bad" residential areas, and "good" and "bad" schools.*

In one or another of these patterns, local communities and local school districts manifest a basic local tendency to provide differential educational opportunities according to the individual's economic resources and social background.

More puzzling are the reasons that the other side of this issue -- toward equality of opportunity -- is taken by national governments. For national governments represent interests of the same people that are found in the nation's communities. One might expect the configuration of political pressures at the national level to be merely the sum of those which exist at the level of the local community. On such reasoning, we would expect national pressures merely to reinforce the pressures toward inequality that exist at the local level, and where any conflict exists, for the national government to be as frequently on one side of the issue as on the other. Yet when conflicts over this issue do occur, national governments nearly always are found on the side of greater equality of educational opportunity.

It is hardly useful in answering this question to start with the assumption, as one is tempted to do, that national governments are more liberal, or more oriented toward equal civil rights, than are local communities. It is more useful to assume that national governments, like local ones, pursue policies that are the resultant of pressures from various interests. This leads directly to the question of why these interests differ at the national and local levels of government.

The first point to note is that many, if not most, of the pressures upon national governments arise from groups and organizations that transcend local

---

* This stratification among schools differs in different areas due to variations in the size of school taxation districts. In some states in the United States, for example, school districts are county-wide, which tends to equalize economic resources over a county. In others, they cover only a municipality or a township, allowing large differences even within a county in expenditure on schools.

communities, and thus have much less interest in affecting local policy than national policy, and less power to do so. The best examples of these groups are political parties themselves. For a variety of reasons, and as evidenced in a variety of contexts, stable opposition parties can be maintained only with great difficulty in small political units, as at the local level.* Thus those persons outside the oligarchic consensus in the local community find, at a state or national level, a political party which caters to their intersts. Most often, though not always, the persons outside the local oligarchic consensus are those without economic resources and family background. Thus there comes to be an interest at state and national levels, pressing toward greater educational opportunity for those with deprived backgrounds.

But the parties are only one type of supra-community organization that exerts pressure in this direction at the national, but not the local level. National business firms have an interest in seeing a well-trained labor force, and little interest in preserving the social structure of local communities. Every increment of education provided at public cost in the public schools is an increment that the firms themselves need not provide. These interests push toward higher educational standards, a pressure which in effect is toward an increase in educational opportunity for those children not now performing at those standards.

While the executive-level employees of business firms have an <u>individual</u> interest in differential education in their own communities, the firms as <u>organizations</u> have an interest in increasing the opportunity for education. Education is one political issue, perhaps more than any other, in which business is most often aligned with a liberal position. There are numerous examples of this: The National Merit Scholarships in the United States, begun and supported

---

* A particularly good example of this in a different ~~context~~ is the decreasing frequency of stable opposition with decrease in size of shops or local unions in the printer's union. See S.M. Lipset, Martin Trow, and James Coleman, <u>Union Democracy</u> (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1956).

by business firms, have had a strong effect in freeing educational opportunity from social background; training programs in industry have ordinarily been more egalitarian, more free from the influence of community social structure, than have the academic programs in the public schools; business interests, which ordinarily oppose governmental expenditures that may lead to tax increases, have not opposed aid to education.

In early days of industry, when firms were centered in a single locality, they had interests not only in education of the masses, but also in maintaining the social structure of the local community, that is, in differential education for different social classes. But as these firms became national, their interests in preserving the local social order have sharply reduced. Thus business interests, which are ordinarily directed toward maintaining the existing social order, are not especially so in this circumstance, but are instead interested in obtaining the best trained labor supply possible, without regard for locality of origin or social class of origin. This shift from a local to a national base of operations for firms creates subtle, rather than radical changes in the pressures they exert. The continued strength of the differentiated educational systems of England and Europe, in contrast to that in North America, is in some part a result of the locality basis for business firms, and their resulting interests in a differentiated system. As firms in Europe become more and more nationalized and multi-branched, their interests in such a differentiated system will vanish.

What is true of business firms organized on a national basis is true of many other organizations as well. Organizations which are quite conservative, with a strong interest in maintaining the social order at a national level, are often not concerned with its maintenance at a local level. This is not to say that they are uninterested in the preservation of law and order, and the protection of property; it is rather that they have no interest in each man keeping his place, and in the absence of upward mobility that is the interest of the local oligarchy at its most rigid.

Thus by the very difference in basis of organization, national interests, to whose pressures national governments are subject, and local interests, to whose pressures local governments are subject, push toward the opposite sides of the "equality of opportunity" issue. The way this issue is manifest differs from one era to another, and from one place to another. In the United States today, the conflict between nation and locality is focused around race; in England, it has always been focused around social class; in Canada, the conflict between province and locality on equality has differed from province to province. It has probably been greatest in Quebec, as here the system has traditionally had most class inequalities, particularly at the secondary level.

The Issue of Minorities: There is a second kind of issue between locality and nation which is closely related to that of inequality in education, but nevertheless different. This is the issue of minority rights. The issue has most often arisen over religion, but has occurred in other matters as well. The recent Supreme Court decision in the United States outlawing religious prayers in public schools is one example. This is the most recent of a long sequence of conflicts between locality and nation over the attempts at introduction of religion into school activities by Protestants. The pattern is nearly always the same: court cases brought by a member of a minority group against the locality, and decided by state or national judges in favor of the minority group member.* In an earlier period in the United States, conflict over religion in the schools took a different form. The public schools in most localities had in their early days (the first part of the 19th century) a heavy dose of Protestant religion, the particular sect determined by the dominant sect in that locality. But around 1850, this began to decrease as minorities in these comminities made demands (often at the level of state government) for reduced religion in schools, or public aid for religious schools. The issue became one of the state vs. localities, resulting in constitutional

---

* See James Coleman, "The Social Sources of Religious Conflict," Journal of Social Issues, 1955.

provisions in a number of states around 1850, more strongly separating public education from religion than had been practiced before. *

Another and more striking example is the recent actions in Canada by the national government to insure the linguistic and cultural rights of French Canadians outside Quebec. This issue exemplifies well the way in which minority interests can be expressed at the national level, but not at the local one in most localities. The possibibility arises simply through the fact that the minority group is in one province a majority, and thus can exert pressure on the national government for the protection of this minority in other provinces. The same pattern is evident in many other cases: a national government acts in behalf of a minority in a locality, not because national governments naturally protect minorities, but because of pressures from areas or interest groups in which that minority is in power. In effect, other localities, in which the minority is dominant, become the interested parties that press the national government to protect minority rights. The national (or state) government becomes the instrument by which political pluralism is introduced into the community. It is the existence of political pluralism at the national level that allows this -- for if there were not a competition at the national level for the votes of a variety of groups, the national government would be as likely as the local government to ignore their interests.

There are some conflicts that can be equally well described under either of the headings given above: equality of educational opportunity, and minority rights. The conflicts over educational opportunity for Negroes in the United States is one such issue -- for as a minority, the rights of Negroes in some schools have been violated, as have the rights of Catholics or Jews in heavily Protestant areas; but the contrast between the case of racial and religious minorities arises

---

* See Rush Welter, Popular Education and Democratic Thought in America, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962).

in the way these rights have been violated: in the case of racial minorities, it has been through differential treatment and reduced opportunity designed to maintain a caste system. In the case of religious minorities, it has been through the lack of differentiation, that is, the imposition of a uniform curriculum containing religious content.

Altogether, these issues constitute one major type of local-national or local-state conflict, in which the nation or state appears as the champion of an otherwise weak and locally defenseless group. Yet as other examples make clear, this is not the only basis for local-national conflict. One other major basis -- though not wholly unrelated to these -- is the issue of social change.

Schools as Instruments of Social Change

There are two very different conceptions of the relation of schools to the social order. One conception is of schools as agents for the transmission of knowledge, culture, and social norms, and thus as agents for maintenance of the social order. The other conception is of schools as crucial institutions of social change, situated as they are at the juncture between generations. Schools have performed both these functions in the past, and will continue to do so. But the relative emphasis of the two functions has been different at different times and places, and what is of interest to us here, is different for local authorities and national organizations, including national governments. As the discussion of differential opportunity indicated, local authorities ordinarily have more interest in stability, and use of the school as a means of maintaining the social order, than do national governments.

Thus again in the issue of social change, national governments are more often on one side, the side of change, and local authorities on the other, the side of stability. The basic interests involved have been discussed in earlier sections; but the content of these issues of change vs. stability goes beyond the questions discussed earlier. Examples will indicate how this is so. In Hitler's Germany, in Stalin's Russia, in Mao's China, and in Castro's Cuba, the schools have been

used extensively by national governments as instruments of change. Modern tota itarian regimes following a coup or revolution move quickly to take control of the schools, in order to indoctrinate the new generation with the ideology of the regime. This is an important device for such regimes to consolidate their power, and break the influence of the preceding generation upon the young. The use of boarding schools, the development of nationalistic youth groups in the schools, such as the Hitler Youth or the Young Pioneers, the introduction of nationalistic propaganda into the curriculum, the indoctrination of teachers and the purging of teachers are methods that these regimes have used to achieve, in a single generation, radical social change. Such attempts at change meet with increasing resistance at lower levels of social organization, all the way down to the family.

What is true in totalitarian regimes is true to a lesser degree in democratic ones: the national government is more likely to see the schools as instruments of social change than is the local government. The local-national conflicts over school integration in the United States illustrate this well, because the national government, pressed by organizations at the national level, attempts to use the schools to create that racial integration which is absent in other aspects of life, to bring about a major transformation of the social structure.

What is evident in this type of conflict is in a sense the self-preservation interests of two social units: the nation and the community. Often, preservation of the social order at the local level and at the nationallevel do not conflict. But under certain circumstances, they do. One of these circumstances is a post-revolutionary period, when there has been a change in the distribution of power among social groups at the national level, without such a change at the local level. The national-local struggle for control of the schools is a struggle over whether the new social order or the old will be transmitted through the schools. A second such circumstance is a period, like that in the United States at the

present time, in which preservation of the social order at the national level is incompatible with preservation of the social order in some communities. Thus in these conflicts, the struggle between community and nation over control of the schools is a struggle for survival of the nation vs. survival of the community.

In contrast to some sources of national-local conflict, these conflicts over schools as instruments of change seem to occur at irregular intervals of time, and are not subject to a steady secular increase. They arise at times of sharp social change, and the schools become a weapon in that change -- ordinarily toward change if the national government gains control, and against change if the local government gains control. Certainly, however, the increasing importance of the schools as agents of socialization increases the likelihood that a government will attempt to use them to further its ends at times of crisis.

Uniformity of Standards, and Educational Statistics

A fourth important area of conflict between local authorities and national governments is the issue of uniform standards. There are currently struggles in almost every western country between national bureaus and local or state educational authorities over educational statistics and the development of uniform educational standards. Concurrently, many of the same state agencies that are resisting national statistics and uniform standards are engaged in struggles with local communities to establish uniform standards across the state. Again we can ask what is the interest of the federal government or the state government in creating such uniformity, or minimum levels? The source of the interest appears in this case to have little to do with the interests of the disadvantaged or minority child, or indeed, with upholding the interests of any individuals against the community. It appears rather to lie in the interests of the nation itself as an entity. In the United States, strong pressures at the national level for upgrading education began with the shock created by Sputnick in 1957.

In western Europe, these pressures currently arise partly in response to the threat posed by American industrial takeovers, and the weakness of European firms in research and development. In short, international competition, for economic growth or economic aggrandizement or scientific dominance, or all of these, creates strong pressures at the national level to raise standards of public schools. One aspect of raising standards is the collection of comparable statistics on different schools, and the imposition of minimum standards throughout the nation.

The local defensive response in these conflicts appears to arise principally from a fear of loss of control itself, and not, as in some of the other issues, on the content of the issue. As in the case of the family-community struggle for control, the interests of the local community in its children's education do not vanish when the nation as a whole begins to develop such interests. Thus quite apart from content on this issue, it is in the interest of the local community to resist the incursions of the nation--even if there is no content disagreement.

The Struggle Against the Invisible Hand

In assessing the arenas in which local-national conflicts over education are fought, and the tactics used, there is one pattern that creates special complications. This is the pattern of inequality in opportunity that exists between school districts, through a residential drift which concentrates high-income families into certain school systems and low-income families into others. With this form of differential educational opportunity, which is coming to replace the earlier patterns of differential treatment within a system or even within a school, there can hardly be a conflict between local authorities and state or national governments; there is no local protagonist. The pattern is wholly a result of individual actions, and represents no action on the part of the school authorities themselves. There is instead a perverse invisible hand, in which each family's pursuit of its own interest leads to greater and greater inequality in the system of education. What such actions can lead to is a pressure for the shift of control of education

from local levels to state or national ones. For as the inequities in educational opportunity become largely inequities between school systems, the principal means of their reduction is through consolidation of the systems. Thus in the United States, as school systems become more and more racially homogeneous, the pressure to consolidate systems should increase. Yet one can question whether the invisible hand need be a perverse one; whether the only counteraction to the perverse invisible hand is larger and larger systems; whether the best way to prevent the undesired consequences of individual free choice is to restrict that choice. In short, is it possible that the invisible hand could become, as Adam Smith envisaged it for economic systems, a beneficent one? To answer this requires a more extensive examination at the possible types of intervention by a national government.

Individual Choice, Local Control, and National Intervention

As the preceding sections have indicated, the nation or the state or province often acts in behalf of groups that lack power at the community level -- families with little economic resources, or families who, in a minority, are forced to submit to conditions imposed by the majority. The power of the national or state government is, in these issues, a supplement to the power of individuals whose power at the local level is deficient. There are, however, serious defects in this mode of supplying the individual with power to counteract the local community. If a group has no strong political representation or pressure group at the national level, the national government will not fight its cause. For example, until Negroes gained political strength in the North after World War II, gross racial inequalities of opportunity existed, with no action from the national government. Similarly at present there are minorities too small and powerless or too dispersed to employ national governments in their behalf, who therefore have no recourse. Of course, when basic civil rights and civil liberties are violated, any individual, however powerless, has access to the courts; but many of the issues under discussion

are not matters of rights and liberties, but of educational policy that affects different groups differently.

A second major defect in the use of national power to supplement individual power against the local community is that this may exchange a lesser evil for a worse one. Althought minorities have recourse from local authorities through a higher level of government, what recourse exists from the power of the highest level itself? The generally greater protection of individual rights by national governments rather than local ones is for from universal, and it is a far less easily opposed power. Thus the very interests of the individual himself lead one to question the extensive use of national governments for individual protection from local ones.

It is useful, then, to ask whether other institutional arrangements would make such national supplement of individual power less necessary. A start toward answering this question comes by examining the peculiar nature of compulsion involved in public education. There are few if any areas of life in which a similar degree of compulsion exists. A child is forced to go to a particular school, with a particular teacher. Unless his family has money to move their residence or remove him from public education, he is subject, five days a week, to an environment over which he and his family have no choice. The school authorities have, in effect, a monopoly over his time.

A number of the issues in which national power is used to supplement individual power against local authorities are directly attributable to this monopoly, and absence of individual choice. For example, the issue which has led to the comprehensive school plans of the British government is the selection at age 11, which in effect decides a child's future at that age by placing him in an academic or non-academic school. Similarly, the rigid track system of Washington, D.C. has been the basis for several conflicts, leading finally to a

precedent-creating court decision.* And the arbitrary boundaries of school districts, which allocate children to schools on the basis of residence, is the source of widespread inequality, and has often led to conflict. There have recently been several court cases in the United States, pressed by national civil rights organizations, against city school systems on the issue of gerrymandering of school district boundaries to maintain school segregation. (The new British comprehensive plan, which creates school districts, is replacing one form of inequality of opportunity by another, for a child's secondary school will be determined by residence, which is already class-homogeneous, and should become even more so under the new arrangements.)

There are several ways in which the educational monopoly over children's time can be broken. One of these is a system like the G.I. Bill of Rights, in which the government would continue to pay for education, but would not operate schools, or if it did, would do so in competition with private schools. This has been proposed by several economists.** There are variants upon this basic idea, such as elimination of the idea of a single school altogether, with families choosing particular teaching centers for different types of learning.***

The essential difficulty with any such means of freeing individuals from local authority through greater consumer choice is that those persons with most

---

* The case of Hobson et.al vs. the District of Columbia, decided in favor of Hobson, by Judge James Skelley Wright, in June, 1967. The unique aspect of this decision was its declaration that the fact of a very high proportion of Negroes in the system (about 95%) created inequality of opportunity for these Negroes. Wright also declared the track system inequitous.

** The first economist to propose this in recent years was Milton Friedman. The possibilities are discussed in Choice in Education, (London: Institute of Economic Affairs, 1967), and in E.G. West, Education and the State, (London: Institute of Economic Affairs, 1966). The proposal has also been urged by Christopher Jenks, in articles on education in The New Republic.

*** I have discussed this possibility in "Toward Open Schools," The Public Interest, Fall, 1967.

resources, economic and personal, are more able to exercise consumer options -- and by doing so, they may create greater inequalities of opportunity than those due to the local school authorities. The best example of this in existing systems is the social class segregation due to residential mobility. Thus if such systems of consumer choice were instituted, some supplement to individual power -- whether through the national government or through national organizations -- would be necessary to insure that the effective possibility of choice was as great for those with few resources as for those with many. Yet despite such complication, the values of consumer choice in education to reduce the monolithic authority of the school system seem great enough to warrant serious study.

The problem is not a simple one, for the exercise of consumer choice by one group in the population may not only be beneficial to them, but harmful to others. This occurs principally because education is at its base a socialization process, and the social composition of a school effectively determines the society into which a child is socialized. There may be disputes over the magnitude of the effects of a child's fellow students upon his learning in school; but it is hardly disputable that one of the major differences that a child would experience between an elite English boarding school, like Eton or Winchester, and a public school in a big-city slum is the society of other children in which he found himself. If families are able to have full freedon of consumer choice, then it seems likely that such differentiated environments would increase. They are presently constrained through residential attendance areas; but even this constraint is becoming less effective, as economic affluence increasingly allows freedom of choice in residence. In fact, the present constraint is effective only for those without economic resources, and thus instead of imposing a constraint upon all, does so only upon those who are economically disadvantaged, or prevented by other reasons (such as race) from freedom of choice in residence.

It would appear that equal opportunity in education can, under such

circumstances, better arise through imposing constraints upon the educational institutions than upon the individual consumers of education. That is, the structure of public education is now such that the consumers of education have no choice, except through change of residence, by those who have resources to do so; and the educational institutions have no constraints upon them. As a consequence, national or state governments frequently intervene on behalf of disadvantaged individuals, whose freedom is most constrained. A structure that would require less such intervention on behalf of individual rights would be one which began from the opposite presumption: a constraint upon educational institutions, allowing full freedom of choice of individuals within those constraints. The institutional constraints would be constraints on the social composition of student bodies. Those social characteristics which otherwise constitute constraints against freedom of choice, such as economic deprivation and race or ethnicity against which there is discrimination, are the relevant criteria. The constraints, in such a hypothetical system, would be minimum levels of students with these characteristics for each school --for example, no school in a particular metropolitan area with an overall proportion of 30% Negro children and 50% of families with incomes under $4,000 could have fewer than 10% Negro children, or fewer than 20% of children from families with incomes under $4,000. Under such constraints, and with full freedom of choice among the consumers themselves, then the cause for intervention by the national government would be sharply reduced: both those who are from advantaged backgrounds and those who are from disadvantaged ones would have greater freedom than they do in present systems. The only loss of freedon would be experienced by the schools themselves, for it would be the schools which were under constraints of social composition. In fact, these constraints would lead to solicitous attention on the part of school administrators to those from disadvantaged background whom they were required to attract, so long as these groups were close to their lower limits

in the schools. The obligation would be shifted: instead of the consumer being under an obligation to attend a particular school, as he presently is, the school would be under an obligation to attract and accept a student body of a given social composition.

This example of a hypothetical system shows how the particular relation between the individual family and the local school authorities affects the need for national intervention. If this relation itself is modified, giving the individual more power at the outset, then national or state intervention to "protect him from the local community" is less necessary, and the dangers attending such intervention are thus reduced. The example illustrates also that national control of education can be of very different sorts: general constraints upon local systems which act to free individuals from its control, or specific intervention in behalf of certain groups, or what is perhaps least attractive, direct substitution of a national monopoly in place of a local monopoly over the individual's educational experience. It is particularly important to recognize that there are these different types of national control, because they differ greatly in the degree of individual freedom they allow, some increasing freedom beyond that presently experienced by education's consumers, and others reducing freedom below that presently experienced.